Indian citizens in foreign jails

1057. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of Indian citizens, particularly from Punjab, have been languishing in foreign jails without trial after being duped by travel agents;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any initiative have been taken for conduct of screening of these detained individuals jointly with the authorities of the respective countries of their detention with a view to obtain their release from the jails and repatriation to India;

(d) if so, the outcome thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (e) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Parity of PIO card holders with NRIs

1058. SHRIMATIKAMLAMANHAR: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to the reply to Unstarred Question 429 given in the Rajya Sabha on 28th July, 2005 and state:

(a) whether question of parity of Person of Indian Origin (PIO) card holders with NRIs in aviation sector including domestic airlines has since been examined;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor,

(c) whether Prime Minister has issued dual citizenship cards to PIOs at Pravasi Bhartiya Divas in Hyderabad in January, 2006; and

(d) if so, what would be the status of PIOs in respect of 100 percent FDI by them in aviation sector after they receive dual citizenship status?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (b) The matter is stii! under consideration of the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

(c) Yes.

(d) Matter is under consideration of the Ministry of Civil Aviation as it requires amendment to the existing rules in this regard.

Opening of Pravasi Centres in Embassies

1059. SHRIMATI S.G INDIRA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to ease the problems of Non-Resident Indians;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Government are considering to open Pravasi Centres in embassies; and

(d) if so, the details and the objectives thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRIVAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has been set up especially to look after the interests of Non-Resident Indians and PIOs. Among other initiatives, voting rights to Indian citizens who are away from their place of residence on account of employment, education or otherwise has been approved by the Government. Also the Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana has been revamped to provide additional benefits to Indian citizens seeking employment abroad. Other initiatives such as the Diaspora Knowledge Network (DKN) will also help overseas Indians to be more closely involved with India's development.

(c) and (d) A proposal to establish Overseas Centres is under examination in consultation with Ministries of External Affairs and Finance. The functions of the proposed centres would be location-specific. Broadly they will coordinate with local overseas Indians and their Associations and arrange value added services like legal assistance, health clinics, family counseling, and investment guidance.

Funding to local bodies

1060. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to give the funds directly to local bodies in the States;

(b) if so, the guidelines worked out so far in this regard;